



SUCCESS STORY

Tea Festival has Commercial Success

The National Tea Festival provided tea & herb firms a chance to network and sign contracts for new sales.



Photo: Agribusiness Project staff

The 7th National Tea Festival brought together producers, buyers, traders, and the general public for an event that had an important impact on the tea & herb industry in Serbia. Significant new sales were recorded, and the public was able to learn about income opportunities from collecting wild forest products.

The USAID Agribusiness Project provided the organizers of the festival with a small grant to insure the success of the event. As a continuation of support for this industry, the Project will also assist with the Belgrade Tea Festival, to be held in September 2010.

The 7th National Tea Festival, which took place from the 10th to the 14th of March at the Army Club in Nis, attracted the participation of more than 6,000 visitors. A total of 22 exhibitors and two associations, from Serbia, Macedonia, Slovenia and Bosnia & Herzegovina, presented their products at the festival. Herbal teas, spices, and honey & honey products, which visitors gladly sampled, were on display and for sale at the festival.

This year's festival, the largest so far, was organized by the Serbian associations "Dr. Jovan Tucakov", and "Film Publik Art" with support from the USAID Serbia Agribusiness Project. The main goals of the Festival were to enhance the quality of local production, increase exports of processed herbs & teas, improve the business environment for herb collectors and processors, and promote employment opportunities for rural residents who can become engaged in cultivation and harvesting. During the festival, exhibitors contracted for sales worth \$100,000, and visitors bought another \$30,000 of product.

Several workshops were held during the festival to inform exhibitors and visitors on issues related to the collection, cultivation and processing of medicinal & aromatic plants. Besides the general public and company representatives, a number of schools organized group visits for students. With Agribusiness Project support, an electronic Herbarium of more than 170 plant species was also on display for exhibitors and visitors to see.

Serbian companies – buyers of medicinal & aromatic plants – held a working meeting and discussed problems related to the pricing and purchase of herbs, the education and certification of herb collectors, the acute problem of herb exports, and how to regain Serbia's position among the largest exporters in the region. As a result of this meeting, a leading Serbian buyer of medicinal & aromatic plants, the Macval Company, contracted for the sale of raw materials with a total value of \$50,000.

Given that the 7th Tea Festival had a record number of visitors and exhibitors this year, it represents an important event that connects all stakeholders in the sector and contributes to the further development of the growing Serbian Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAP) Industry.